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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 IO-13 DHA-02 AID-05 COME-00 EB-07 FRB-03
TRSE-00 XMB-02 OPIC-03 LAB-04 EPG-02 SIL-01
OMB-01 STR-04 /105 W
----------161722Z 021391 /47
R 131059Z MAY 77
FM AMCONSUL ZAGREB
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4474
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
AMCONSUL TRIESTE
CINCEUR VAIHINGEN
AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ZAGREB 396

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AU, YO
SUBJECT: SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY AS PRESENTED BY SLOVENIAN OFFICIAL

REF: A) TRIESTE 138 NOTAL; B) VIENNA 3247 NOTAL

1. AN OFFICIAL OF THE SLOVENIAN REPUBLICAN SECRETARIAT FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION WILLINGLY DISCUSSED AT SOME LENGTH CONTROVERSY OVER SLOVENE MINORIRY IN AUSTRIAN PROVINCE OF CARINTHIA WITH CONGEN OFFICER. FOLLOWING ELEMENTS APPEAR TO BE NEW INTERPRETATIONS OF EXISTING YUGOSLAV POSITION OR NEW VIEWS ON CONTROVERSY.

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,2. DEFINITION: WHEN ASKED TO DESCRIBE THE CONTROVERSY SUCCINCTLY, THE SLOVENIAN OFFICIAL PUT IT THIS WAY: IN 1955 WHEN THE AUSTRIAN STATE TREATY WAS SIGNED THERE WERE ABOUT 65 SLOVENE COMMUNITIES IN CARINTHIA IN WHICH THE SLOVENE LANGUAGE WAS USED EXTENSIVELY IN SCHOOLS, IN COURTS, AND IN CONDUCTING BUSINESS AT GOVERNMENT OFFICES. NOW, THE AUSTRIANS CLAIM THERE ARE ONLY ABOUT NINE COMMUNITIES WITH SUFFICIENTLY LARGE MINORITIES

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TO WARRANT PRESERVATION OF SUCH MINORITY RIGHTS. IN A WORD, HE SAID, THE MINORITY IS BEING ASSIMILATED, AND THE TREATY IS BEING VIOLATED.

3. RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: (A) THE AUSTRIAN PROPOSAL TO FORM A "COUNCIL" TO DEAL WITH MINORITY QUESTIONS IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THE SLOVENE MINORITY IN CARINTHIA BECAUSE THEY FEEL IT WOULD WEAKEN THEIR VOICE AND POSITION. YUGOSLAVIA BACKS THIS VIEW. (B) AT A MEETING OF THE MIXED ECONOMIC COMMISSION HELD IN BELGRADE THE WEEK OF MAY 2, THE AUSTRIANS PROPOSED DROPPING FURTHER DISCUSSION OF THE MINORITY ISSUE AT ECONOMIC MEETINGS.H THE YUGOSLAVS RESPONDED THIS WAS NOT POSSIBLE FOR AT SOME POINT IN THE FUTURE NON-RESOLUTION OF THE MINORITY ISSUE MIGHT PRECLUDE "NORMALDZ ECONOMIC RELATIONS.

4. THE SOUTH TYROL MODEL: SLOVENIAN OFFICIAL MENTIONED THAT YUGOSLAVS HAD PROPOSED A SOLUTION BASED ON RIGHTS EXTENDED TO AUSTRIAN MINORITY IN SOUTH TYROL. (IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHETHER THIS WAS A RECENT INITIATIVE TAKEN AT THE BELGRADE MEETING OR WAS OF OLDER VINTAGE.) YUGOSLAVS THOUGHT THIS A GOOD MODEL OF HOW MINORITIES OUGHT TO BE TREATED, NOTING THERE ARE AMPLE LANGUAGE RIGHTS IN SCHOOLS, COURTS AND GOVERNMENT OFFICES. THE SOUTH TYROLESE HAVE THEIR OWN GERMAN LANGUAGE TV NETWORK WITH

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AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ZAGREB 396

SOME 180 RELAY STATIONS TO ASSURE THAT EVERY HAMLET AND HOUSE RECEIVES A CLEAR SIGNAL. MOST IMPORTANT FROM THE YUGOSLAV STANDPOINT, THE AUSTRO-ITALIAN AGREEMENT ON THE SOUTH TYROL GUARANTEES ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE FOR THE MINORITY. AS A CONSE-QUENCE OF FAVORABLE TRADE ARRANGEMENTS, THERE HAS BEEN A HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT OF LIGHT INDUSTRY WHICH IS IN THE HANDS OF THE MINORITY. TOURISM, ANOTHER SOURCE OF ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE, IS ALSO MAINLY IN MINORITY HANDS AND IS PROSPERING. THE AUSTRIANS TURNED DOWN THIS YUGOSLAV PROPOSAL POINTING OUT THAT TIMES HAVE CHANGED SINCE THE SOUTH TYROL SOLUTION WAS WORKED OUT, AND THAT SUCH AN ARRANGEMENT WOULD NOW BE ANTI-GATT, UNCONSTITUTIONAL IN AUSTRIA, AND NOT IN CONFORMITY WITH AUSTRIA'S OBLIGATIONS UNDER THE EEC-EFTA ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT.

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5. AN ECONOMIC SOLUTION: SLOVENIAN OFFICIAL WENT ON TO SAY THAT YQGOSLAVIA HAD CONCLUDED AFTER CAREFUL ANALYSIS THAT ANY SOLUTION TO SLOVENE MINORITY ISSUE MUST HAVE A STRONG ECONOMIC BASE. UNLESS MINORITY MAKES ECONOMIC PROGRESS, THEY ARE BOUND TO LOSE THEIR IDENTITY. HE NOTED THAT THE MINORITY HAS NO CAPITAL AND HAS NO OPPORTUNITY TO PULL ITSELF UP. AT PRESENT, A WORKER WHO IS ACTIVE IN MINORITY AFFAIRS OR IN ASSERTING HIS MINORITY RIGHTS IS LIKELY TO BE FIRED IF HE IS IN THE EMPLOY OF A "GERMAN" OR "NAZI" FACTORY OWNER. THE POLITICAL SUPPORT NOW EXTENDED BY THE YUGOSLAV GOVERNMENT IS IMPORTANT TO SUCH PEOPLE FOR IT LETS THEM KNOW THAT THEY ARE NOT ALONE AND THAT THEY DO NOT HAVE TO SUBMIT TO ASSIMILATION. SLOVENIAN OFFICIAL SPECULATED THAT THERE MIGHT BE A ROLE FOR YUGOSLAV CAPITAL IN CARINTHIA. PERHAPS AFFILIATES, JOINT VENTURES WITH YUGOSLAV ENTERPRISES OR OTHER FOROS OF PLANT-LEVEL ECONOMIC COOPERATION WOULD PERMIT THE MINORITY TO GAIN CONTROL OF ITS OWN ECONOMIC DESTINY AND USE THIS BASE TO PRESERVE ITS SLOVENE LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL IDENTITY. ALTHOUGH AUSTRIA REBUFFED THE FIRST YUGOSLAV TRY FOR AN ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE PACKAGE, YUGOSLAVIA FEELS STRONGLY ENOUGH ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF MINORITY ECONOMIC SELF-SUFFICIENCY THAT IT WILL SEEK AGAIN TO ACHIEVE THIS AIM.

6. SPILLOVER: IN LINE WITH PRESS AND OTHER REPORTS WE HAVE SEEN SINCE BEGINNING OF YEAR, SLOVENIAN OFFICIAL ALSO DOES NOT RULE OUT EVENTUAL INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ISSUE. HE MENTIONED POSSIBILITY OF RAISING IT AT CSCE OR TAKING IT TO THE UN. ON OTHER HAND, HE ACKNOWLEDGED THERE HAS BEEN POSITIVE AUSTRIAN RESPONSE ON CERTAIN MINORITY COMPLAINTS SUCH AS PRACTICE OF NOT ASSIGNING SLOVENE SPEAKING CIVIL SERVANTS TO THEIR HOME DISTRICTS. AUSTRIA RECENTLY HAS AGREED TO CHANGE THIS POLICY.

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HE DENIED THAT YUGOSLAVIA WAS HAVING PROBLEMS "ON A WHOLE RANGE OF ISSUES" WITH AUSTRIA (REFTEL A). CITING SEVERAL SLOVENIA-CARINTHIA REGIONAL MATTERS ON WHICH THERE IS EXCELLENT COOPERATION (KARAWANKEN HIGHWAY TUNNEL, DOUBLE-TRACKING PRESENT KARAWANKEN RAIL TUNNEL, AND MATING SLOVENE AND AUSTRIAN GAS PIPELINES), HE SAID PRESENT LEVEL OF UNDERSTANDING IS GOOD ON ALMOST ALL MATTERS
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Message Attributes

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Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
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Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977ZAGREB00396
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770173-0525
Format: TEL
From: ZAGREB
Handling Restrictions: n/a
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Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 4
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 TRIESTE 138, 77 VIENNA 3247
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
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Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2524596
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SLOVENE MINORITY CONTROVERSY AS PRESENTED BY SLOVENIAN OFFICIAL
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, AU, YO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1a4cd593-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009